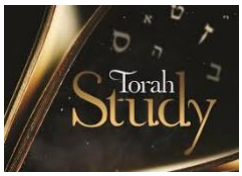
20180301 Exodus 30:11-34:35 "The Golden Calf: Creating God in Our Own Image"



"The Golden Calf: Creating God in Our Own Image" Series: "Lessons for Living: A Christian Walk through the Torah" by Faber McMullen, Union Grove Baptist Church ©2017-2018

21 - Ki Tisa "When You Take" - Exodus 30:11–34:35

Two weeks ago, we sat and watched as Moses met with God on Mount Sinai. The people had seen so much of God. Remember the people saw the light and the thunder, and they had the privilege to see God's presence like few have ever seen. They had already heard the Ten Commandments as Moses related to the people what God had told him.

We then come across one of the most startling and unbelievable accounts in the Bible. How could the Israelites have seen the plagues, left Egypt, gone across the Red Sea, seen the Egyptian army destroyed and ended up creating a golden calf to worship? It is very easy to read this Torah portion with a critical spirit and to quickly separate ourselves from the sin that we see. Yet, as we look deep in the text, if we are honest with ourselves, we find ourselves running towards the golden calf. Please open your Bibles and follow along with me as I read the account starting at Exodus Chapter 32 verse one.

32 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."
2 And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me." **3** So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron. **4** And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.
Then they said, "This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"
5 So when Aaron saw *it,* he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow *is* a feast to the Lord." **6** Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. (Exodus 32:1-6 NKJV).

As I just mentioned, when we read this, we disassociate ourselves from the Israelites. We wonder how in the world people that have seen the glory of God can so quickly turn their back on Him. However, if we look closely in this passage, we can see definitive steps

that the people took in moving toward the golden calf. Their sin was centered in three things: God's Timing, God's Image, and God's Presence.

God's Timing

Verse one tells us, "Now when the people saw that Moses delayed," the trouble all began. They saw that Moses delayed. Was Moses delayed? How do we know that Moses was delayed? According to whom was Moses late? Do you think when God called Moses up to the mountain that Moses was late in getting there? Was God late in being there when Moses got to the top? It was the people who thought that Moses was delayed. They were measuring God's visit with Moses according to their time table, not God's timetable. This was merely the opinion of the Israelites. We get into serious trouble when we are unwilling to submit to the timetable of God.

According to them Moses was late, and this waiting period became a stumbling block to them. Often when we are in some sort of situation, we call upon the Lord. Then, instead of submitting to God's timing, we try to figure God out, and make God get in line with our timetable. This is very dangerous to do. We say things like, "Lord, I shouldn't still be single", or "God, You should have doubled this congregation by now". We attempt to turn God into what I've always called a "cigar box god." What I mean by that is that we think we have every aspect figured out about God and that we can put that god into something the size of a cigar box to pull out whenever we need a trick done. I am not interested in serving and worshipping a god that is so small that He can fit into a cigar box.

When we try to put God into the box of our expectations, we are starting the process of taking the gold and throwing it into the fire to make our own golden calf. Our dissatisfaction with the timetable of God allows disappointment and frustration to enter into our walk with Him. God told Moses to just wait. Moses wasn't late. The people down the mountain became frustrated and anxious because, according to their timetable, God was running late.

When someone is late you feel all sorts of emotions. (Personally, I usually feel put out or sort of angry.) If the person is really late you might begin to feel forgotten, afraid, or unloved. We must remember that God is not submissive to our wants and desires. We are to be in submission to Him.

We now have a society which demands instant gratification. Google tells us that 53% of all websites will be abandoned if they take longer than three seconds to load. Google also says that in order to be really effective a website should not take longer than one-half

second.[1] God loves us too much to be subject to our timetable or our desires. He is good and He knows what the best thing is for us. When we learn to trust in Him and His goodness we begin to understand that it is all about God's timing and not about ours.

The Israelites decided to take matters into their own hands. And do you know what's so ironic? While they thought that He had forgotten all about them, He was making great provision for them and for all of mankind up on Mt. Sinai. Believer, don't allow yourselves to be shaken in the moments of the unknown. Remember that God loves you and remember that He is good. We often become so impatient in the wanting and waiting. We know that God has promised us great things and we want them now; but we get worn out waiting. Let's look at a few scriptures about waiting.

31 But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew *their* strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31 NKJV).

Spiritual muscles are developed in the season of waiting. I remember when we started our ministry here at Union Grove in July of 2016; it seemed like it would take forever for help to come. And, just when I was at the point of giving up on ever seeing help with the music ministry, I submitted and said "Okay God, if You want Sandy and I to do this alone we will, and it's up to You whether it brings You glory or not." And the very next week Larry Waddell came into our lives. And I think everyone who saw that can say that Larry is exactly who God intended to assist in worship and in this ministry.

God makes promise after promise in His word and we see over and over that there is a season of waiting. God promised Abraham and Sarah an heir, and they grew impatient with the promise. So, Abraham took matters into his own hands, and he went in to his wife's handmaid. And what did Abraham and Sarah get? They got an Ishmael who became the Arab people. They were a thorn in the backside of the Jewish people then and they are still a thorn in the backside of Israel today. When we make our timing more important than God's timing, we get an Ishmael instead of an Isaac. God wants to give us the best and we settle for a phony counterfeit. We trade the promises of God for the pain of what we bring on ourselves.

Waiting should be bathed in faith and patience. The writer of Hebrews tells us,

11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through <u>faith</u> and <u>patience</u> inherit the promise (Hebrews 6:11-12 NKJV).

Faith + Patience = Inheriting the promises of God.

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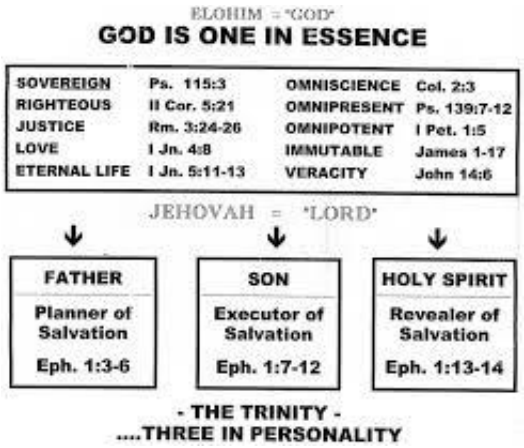
[1] https://www.hobo-web.co.uk/your-website-design-should-load-in-4-seconds/



God's Image

The Israelites wanted to make God into a god *they* envisioned. Now, let's read from verses two through four. We see that Aaron took the gold and fashioned a golden calf. As a side note, where did this gold come from? It came from God's gift to them in the days before they left Egypt. You know, it is so typical of us to take the gifts that God gives us and to make idols of them. We take God's blessings and we worship them. We turn them into our idols. Think about how we do this. You might have prayed and prayed to get a job, and once you got the job you put it between you and God. You might have prayed and prayed for a child and then when that child was born, you put it on the throne and made a god of it. You might have desperately prayed for financial success and relief, and then God gave you success. Now you spend all you make on yourself, and you've placed those material things above your love for Him.

Looking at the text we see something very interesting. Note that they did not reject God altogether. No. They were really saying "make us an idol that looks like the version of God that we desire." They said make us an ***elohim***, but make Him like we want Him to look. We must be very careful to not try to fashion God into our own imagined version of God. When we want to make God look like our version instead of who He is, we are creating a golden calf to worship.

The children of Israel cast an image of God the way that they wanted Him to be. They were involved in syncretism. That means they were trying to mix God's true image with the image of the god in the pagan culture around them. Interestingly, when they made the version that they wanted, it looked just like the world's image of God. They made the calf to look like the perception of the gods that they had seen back in Egypt. Perhaps our problem today is that we are worshipping the god that we've made more than the God who is. We've imagined God to be what we want Him to be. We're worshipping a god we see in the world instead of the God we see in the Word. We must remember that we don't define Him. He defines us. We often want more of what God can do for us instead of wanting more of who He is. We must worship Him in spirit and in truth. We must worship Him as He truly is revealed in His Word.

God's Presence God desired fellowship with His people. The people didn't want fellowship with Him. They wanted blessing and protection.

The whole passage depicts the Israelites rejection of the presence of God. Even when He showed Himself, they moved away from Him. They wanted His protection and blessing, but they didn't want Him. God wanted relationship, but they wanted an insurance policy against bad things that might happen to them. Moses was the complete opposite.

Moses wanted more of God. Remember in our Torah study when we read along as Moses told God, "Please, show me Your glory." (Exodus 33:18 NKJV). Think about it. Moses wanted ALL that God is to be present in his life. He wanted to know God more and to know more about God. The people had no desire for such a relationship. As they were pulling off their gold to create a golden calf, God was on Sinai giving them plans for a tabernacle wherein He would dwell among them. Remember that the tabernacle was also called the "Tent of Meeting." God desired to meet with His people.

As I told you two weeks ago, Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden because of sin. Since that time mankind has longed to get back to the garden. God made this tabernacle to give Him a place to live among them, and each step in the tabernacle worship was about relationship. At first, God wanted to dwell physically among His people, and now He wants to live spiritually inside of us. So many Christians want God's promises to be fulfilled in their lives, but do not want His presence in their lives. They want to be blessed, but they want to be left alone to themselves and their sinful ways. We want His guarantees but not His godliness. Let's have the joy of true fellowship with our heavenly Father.

So, as you live out your life this next week, think about how you are sometimes very close to making a golden calf. You and I aren't morally superior to this bunch in any way. Without spiritual diligence we are right there making for ourselves a golden calf, and we bow down to worship it.

1) When we refuse to wait on God and trust in Him, we are moving dangerously towards the golden calf.

2) When we refuse to worship Him as He is, and instead worship what we want Him to be, we are moving dangerously towards the golden calf.

3) When we refuse to fellowship with Him and just want His guarantees for our lives, we are moving dangerously towards the golden calf.

Invitation - Let us pray.

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